

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany -- As dozens of Stryker vehicles pour in to the Port of Bremerhaven this week, workers at U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr also continue to receive plane loads of 2nd Cavalry Regiment Soldiers who will train with the unit's signature vehicles at the huge training facility in Bavaria.

The soldiers and their equipment are being shipped from their previous home at Fort Lewis, Wa.

The combat brigade is the largest unit to relocate to Germany in the past several decades. It's also first large unit to arrive concurrently with family members. As Soldiers and their families arrive at Nurnburg, they are bused directly from the airport to an in-processing center. Following initial in-processing, they are transported with baggage and pets to their quarters at Vilseck.

To accommodate the huge influx, the entire Vilseck housing office has been co-located with the in-processing center at a gym at Grafenwoehr. The housing office arranges furniture, appliances, leases and other support for those who will occupy on and off-post housing.

"Fast, efficient and virtually painless" are the watchwords garrison officials are using to describe the settling-in of a unit that will eventually comprise some 9,000 soldiers and family members. For example, families will find hold baggage waiting for them in their new quarters.

Grafenwoehr has been "ramping up" for the new Stryker unit for the past several months, building new schools, family housing, training areas and recreational facilities, such as a new multi-million dollar fitness center.

As construction crews were completing support facilities, the Stryker advance party worked with IMA-EURO logisticians to arrange air and sea transport of equipment. Some 300 of the brigade's signature vehicles are being shipped to the Bavarian post.

The Strykers add a new dimension to USAG Grafenwoer-Vilseck's role as a training base and power projection platform. The new unit also enhances training partnerships with host nation units. Some of the first-to-arrive Stryker Soldiers have already undergone machine gun training with a German panzer unit. The arrival of the modular brigade is seen as providing added capability for NATO alliance forces.

Officials also note that even as some units are leaving Europe for stateside basing, the Army is sending one of its premier new brigades to Germany.